

Andi Mathis

Artists' HOUSING

**Creating
Live/Work Space
That Lasts**

Publishing Center for Cultural Resources



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**Creating
Live/Work Space
That Lasts**

By Mike Lipske

**Commissioned by
Design Arts Program
National Endowment for the Arts**

**Published by
Publishing Center for Cultural Resources
New York City 1988**

This publication was produced under a cooperative agreement between Mike Lipske and the Design Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

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Published by
Publishing Center for Cultural Resources
625 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10012

**Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Lipske, Mike.
Artists' Housing.
Bibliography: p. 50
1. Artists' studios—United States.
2. Artists—Homes and haunts—United States.
I. Title.
NA7195.A75L56 1987 728'.0247
87-5712

ISBN 0-89062-231-0

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Introduction

A recent report in the Boston *Herald* tells of a city-wide conference on artists' housing, where nearly all of the 300 artists present claimed to have experienced or to be undergoing "housing displacement." Displacement, of course, is our careful way of saying that those 300 artists once had, or would soon have, no roof over their heads.

The situation of Boston's artists is not unique. For decades, artists across the country have been pioneering neglected but affordable urban neighborhoods, only to be forced out when what one arts administrator calls the "hanging-plant" crowd invades those newly safe, newly chic areas of downtown.

In other ages, artists working at the pleasure of wealthy patrons frequently were provided with living-and-working accommodations as remuneration for commissioned works of art. In our time, with the rise of modern museums and modern markets, and with the disappearance of guaranteed sales and most other forms of patronage, artists have had to secure their own housing and studio space.

Economic necessity, as well as creative convenience, has dictated that artists live and work in the same space. Artists have long set up homes and studio spaces in vacant downtown factories, warehouses, and other discards of the industrial business districts that have relocated to suburban locations or the outer edges of the city. Such abandoned industrial spaces are ideal for artists in many ways: They offer space to create large canvases and sculptures, good light, over-sized elevators, and industrial flooring capable of holding heavy sculptures.

Live/work arrangements save money, but they can also put artists at odds with local laws that prohibit people from working in residential areas, or from residing in

industrial or commercial parts of town. Where artists have escaped the notice of zoning officials or have made costly improvements to their live/work spaces to satisfy building codes, they have frequently fallen victim to gentrification, the so-called "SoHo effect," wherein the presence of enough artists in a hitherto forgotten neighborhood begins to draw boutiques and galleries and seekers after the bohemian lifestyle. These inrushing commercial tenants and comparatively wealthy non-artist neighbors drive up the cost of real estate. And that drives out the artists.

For years, artists and arts organizations have pondered gentrification and ways to prevent it. While we studied, new SoHos have arisen, and more and more artists have learned the meaning of displacement. Only lately have we begun to see that in certain urban neighborhoods gentrification is almost inevitable, and that providing housing security for artists most often means that artists be made owners rather than renters of property.

This book examines the American artist's problem of finding and keeping long-term, affordable live/work space and offers half a dozen case studies where artists have been able to solve this problem. The book is not intended as a definitive study but a catalyst to show what can be done and to stimulate further ideas.

Half of the case studies in this book show how groups of artists have been able to obtain financing and, with the partnership of architects, city planners, lawyers, businessmen and others, develop artist-owned housing that promises to provide its residents with sure moorings against the tides of gentrification. Other case studies discuss live/work arrangements short of ownership that nevertheless provide their resident artists with a greater than usual measure of housing stability.

As old warehouses and other buildings become artist co-ops, the painters and sculptors living inside them can concentrate on making art, rather than on creating next year's new, temporary live/work space. At the same time, as artists gain greater control of their housing destiny, they create models that can help other artists in our rapidly changing urban areas.

We hope this book will be useful to individual artists who are facing the possibility of displacement; to mem-

bers of artists' organizations and members of state arts agencies, which work with artists on this issue; to representatives of state legislatures and city officials who can affect building codes and regulations; to urban planners and developers who need to consider ways to maintain existing artists' enclaves in neighborhoods that are slated for development and rising property values; and to members of the design professions who can make a contribution through the sensitive design of artists' live/work spaces.

Ultimately, solving the artists' housing crisis benefits us all. Keeping roofs over the heads of our artists ensures that those creators do what they do best—create the art that continues to enrich our neighborhoods and our lives.

*Adele Chatfield-Taylor
November, 1986*

*Despondent because of his inability
to earn a living by his brush,
a padlock barring him from his studio
in which were his prized pictures
as well as his bed, penniless and friendless,
Henry Alexander, a young American painter . . .
gave up the struggle against adverse fate,
and with a draught of carbolic acid
ended his troubles early this morning.*

—San Francisco Examiner,
May 16, 1894

It's still tough out there. Today's struggling artist may not feel compelled to reach for the carbolic acid—and for that we give thanks—but keeping a roof over bed and easel hasn't grown much easier since Henry Alexander despaired at adverse fate.

After a year of conflict with city zoning officials, a Washington, D.C., artist laments, "There was a functioning art colony here that produced massive amounts of work. Now there are three or four of us left. I'm heartbroken over the whole thing."

"The building would have fallen apart if I hadn't lived there," says a Philadelphia painter evicted from the abandoned downtown factory where he had lived and worked for eight years. "I feel like I was keeping this bloody building alive so the Redevelopment Authority could sell it in good condition to some guy off the street."

In Santa Monica, a creator of metal collages, musing on the mysteries of gentrification, speaks of "the phenomenon that artists are like some kind of mold, that if

you put them in some crummy area, in twenty years it will become some glittery SoHo."

A Boston arts administrator points out that when neighborhoods do begin to glitter, it becomes profitable to scrub away the mold: "The artist moves in, and the hanging-plant crowd follows them. Once that happens, the landlords realize they've got a very hot property for the young stockbrokers. And the artist is out. The rent goes up and the artist can no longer afford it."

Generally, of course, the presence of artists in cities is deemed desirable. Outright hostility of the sort heard a decade ago at a Berkeley, California, planning commission hearing ("The so-called artist element . . . degrades an area," said opponents of a plan to legalize live/work space) is unusual. These days, city officials covet "the arts" and artists with nearly as much fervor as they pursue major-league baseball franchises; in city after city those officials have seen that artists, even when they lay aside their pens, have drawing power.

"It's rough to live in cities," says Los Angeles Councilman Joel Wachs. "You've got crime, you've got smog, you've got high prices. One of the things that make cities attractive are cultural amenities. Artists help create that kind of environment that attracts the kind of people we need in our city."

"Art matters," said Houston Mayor Kathy Whitmire, according to the *Washington Post*, even in the darkest hour of the Texas oil glut. "It attracts business—and we're diversifying our economy . . . Even in these times of difficult economics, you won't see a reduction in our commitment to the arts."

Most artists are equally avid about wanting to reside in cities, not only for access to galleries, clients, supplies, and rent-paying, part-time jobs, but also for the opportunity to rub elbows with other artists, and for the inspiration that rises, steam-like, from the urban environment. "Art comes out of the social context," says a Los Angeles artist. "It's part of the challenging atmosphere of the city."

Yet all too often, and despite the best of intentions, relations between the city and the artist resemble those between the star-crossed lovers in paperback romances, wherein two partners are long on longing, but their



attempts at union are fraught with friction. Consider the case of Washington, D.C., and Zenith Gallery.

Washingtonians are rightly proud of the city's galleries and museums, and municipal government stresses its commitment to the arts and local artists. Yet with its by-the-book enforcement of zoning regulations at Zenith, maintains the gallery's founder, Margery Goldberg, the city government is turning artists into criminals.

Beginning in 1978, for a period of eight years, what Goldberg calls "an unusual collection of painters, sculptors, woodworkers, metalsmiths and jewelers, photographers, graphic designers, dress designers, interior designers, framers, singers, writers, [and] comedians" lived and labored in the collection of Rhode Island Avenue rowhouses that include her gallery. "We never were legal in terms of permits and so on," Goldberg says of the 50 artist live/work studios. "But Zenith thrived and flourished."

Then, in 1985, a Zenith tenant evicted for chronic nonpayment of rent tipped off city officials, and investigators from the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs began visiting the gallery, citing artists "for operating without a certificate of occupancy, failing to have a business license, and anything else they could come up with," according to Goldberg.

Zenith is located in a part of Washington zoned for

"**Artists,**" believes Zenith Gallery's Margery Goldberg, "should be able to pursue their work and hence their lives in all zoning areas, as do doctors and dentists."

high-density apartment buildings; art galleries are permitted, but studios are not. City inspectors also found fire code violations in the live/work complex.

Zenith's owners have agreed to bring the buildings up to code. "The landlords are very sympathetic to the arts," says Goldberg. "They've stuck it out this whole year." But the improvements will raise Zenith's low rents by about 25 percent. Goldberg is hopeful that a city zoning code amendment will permit studios to be reestablished at Zenith. However, artists' housing will probably not be permitted, and with only a handful of artists remaining, the Zenith community has suffered.

City bureaucrats "were in here a lot," says Goldberg. "Some of them behaved badly—rude to the artists, threatening. And this is their [the artists'] life that was being ripped to shreds." She sees the city at cross purposes with itself, praising galleries like Zenith for improving neighborhoods, then displacing artists with strict interpretation of zoning regulations.

"We can't work in residential zoning; we can't live in commercial zoning (even if we could afford it)," Goldberg has written. "What we need is a special zoning distinction for artists' loft space. Artists should be able to

pursue their work and hence their lives in all zoning areas, as do doctors and dentists. Artists, after all, enhance neighborhoods."



Until city inspectors found zoning-and-fire-code violations, Rhode Island Avenue rowhouses provided live/work space for artists affiliated with Zenith Gallery (opposite).

KENNETH M. WYNER

In an era when housing stock is decreasing and housing costs are climbing, most people are hard-pressed to find places to live in cities. On their traditionally low incomes, artists have an even tougher time of it. Thus, many artists must live where they work, and work where they live, a money-saving arrangement that puts them at odds with municipal zoning and building codes. Those codes, at least until recently, have generally prohibited artists from living legally in industrial or commercial areas of town. The same codes often prohibit studios in residential neighborhoods. When codes do allow exceptions,



building-code officials may mandate property improvements that drive rents—or the possibility of ownership—well beyond the means of artists. If enough artists do acquire live/work space in a particular part of the city, their very presence may attract small galleries, boutiques, and wealthier residential tenants. Soon enough, the artists who pioneered a neglected neighborhood are priced out, and sent searching for a new place to live and work. Almost always, they will leave behind improved property—a non-recoupable investment of labor, time, and money.

Performing artists need places to rehearse and present their work, and often struggle greatly to find it. But while their living space may be modest, it rarely doubles as a place of work.

Writers may be intimately acquainted with poverty, but beyond room for a desk, a chair, and flights of imagination, they have few space requirements.

Visual artists are a case apart. Finances dictate that their work space jostles up against their home, and so does good sense: it is a creative convenience to have one's studio at hand when inspiration knocks. And, even if Leonardo advocated a small room to discipline the art-

ist's mind, his vocational descendants say the more square footage the better.

"I needed to have good-sized spaces," says metal-collage artist Tony Berlant, explaining how he came to remodel a two-story, "mom-and-pop grocery" in Santa Monica for his combination home/studio. "I knew people tend to make work in response to the size of their spaces." With 22-foot ceilings, he says, "Now I'm doing pretty big things."

Berlant's 6,800 square feet of live/work space is exceptionally enormous, but most artists make area a top priority, not only for the influence of space on the size of their creations, but also for the opportunity to work on several pieces at once. "Open, clear space . . . and as much of it as possible," one sculptor wrote in *American Artist*, is "the primary, basic, and general requirement."

Studios in Carnegie Hall began doubling as artists' homes during the Great Depression. New tenants of the renovated complex will pay breathtaking Manhattan market-rate rents.



In their search for clean, well-lighted places, artists have turned old gas stations and garages, churches and carriage houses into live/work space. Downtown industrial lofts have been remodeled by the thousands. In Florida and California, some sculptors have solved the studio half of the space quest by working outdoors in a corner of a shipyard or scrapyard. In New York City, posher accommodations are available to artists who can afford the rent or wait out a vacancy.

Charles Dana Gibson, Agnes De Mille, Leonard Bernstein, and Marlon Brando are among the luminaries who have resided in the artist studios around and atop Carnegie Hall. Built in the 1890s as working space for visual artists, the studios began doubling as homes during the Great Depression, when many artists could no longer afford two addresses.

About 30 of Carnegie Hall's 130 studios still serve as live/work space; the remainder are rented out solely as studios or to commercial tenants. Renovation of Carnegie Hall is bringing improved electrical and mechanical systems for studios, but despite a rent strike and a legal battle by tenants to hold down



RICHARD LAIRD

rents, new tenants will now pay midtown-Manhattan market rate for studios—about \$1,000 a month, for example, for 360 square feet.

The six-to-eight-year waiting list for apartments in Westbeth—the world's largest artists' housing complex—is due at least partly to the project's decidedly nonmarket-rate rents. Conceived in response to an increasing need for low-cost, live/work space in New York, Westbeth was purchased and renovated in the late 1960s by the J.M. Kaplan Fund, with help from the National Endowment for the Arts. Renovation of the former Bell Telephone Laboratories, a cluster of five Greenwich Village buildings that overlook the Hudson River, resulted in 384 residential units for artists, plus management problems that are only now being resolved.

Heavily subsidized (by the Kaplan Fund and Endowment, by a 40-year, low-interest Federal Housing Administration mortgage, and by a City of New York property tax abatement), the project nevertheless "went under," in the words of a Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) official. Westbeth's mortgage is now

With nearly 400 subsidized rental units, Westbeth is the world's largest artists' housing site. Waiting six to eight years is the first step to moving in.

held by HUD; a workout plan that could iron out Westbeth's debts in a few years is under review at the federal housing agency.

Rents remain low, with a small studio leasing for \$301 a month, a three-bedroom unit going for \$574. "Without exaggerating, four times as much would be the fair market rate, maybe five times as much, if you walked across the street," says Westbeth site manager Vita Sibirsky. Those subsidized rents are only for *bona fide* artists. Tenant committees screen applicants for qualifications and credentials. "The painters who have been accepted on our waiting list are generally people who have been shown in galleries of some renown," says Sibirsky. Applicants must also have incomes below HUD-specified levels.

As for the small percentage of non-artist Westbeth tenants (the surviving spouse of a deceased painter, for example), "I doubt any court in New York City is going to evict somebody because they're not an artist," says a HUD official in New York.

Since long before Westbeth was built, artists have sought less formal, but equally inexpensive live/work arrangements. Landlords in need of cash, and lax enforcement of zoning regulations, made it easy to rent space in commercial or industrial buildings left behind when business fled to beckoning suburbs. Downtown lofts and warehouses offered vast floor area, high ceilings, sturdy floors, freight elevators, perhaps even skylights. They also demanded loving labor in order to achieve even minimally comfortable living and working environments. "The customary procedure in opening up a loft," goes a *New York Times* article from the early 1960s, "is not, as might be expected, for the sensitive creator to throw open his windows to the world and dilate his nostrils in an excess of feeling too great for anything but deep breathing, but to close the windows and replace broken panes."

If the price was right, illegal living in commercial buildings also posed problems. As outlaw renters in non-residential areas of the city, artists frequently went without such basic services as garbage collection or reliable



Westbeth courtyard: The former Bell Telephone Laboratories in Greenwich Village were redesigned for artists' housing, in the late 1960s, by architect Richard Meier.

police protection; they sometimes sacrificed their right to vote, or the opportunity to enroll their children in nearby public schools. Landlords seeking to raise the rent, or to evict artists, were sometimes not above withholding heat, electricity, or water; in extreme cases, artists who resisted such pressure were threatened with violence.

As city officials became concerned about declining tax revenues, or about the possibility of fires and other

catastrophes in buildings not up to code, artists faced new threats of eviction. Blackout curtains were hung in windows at night, to conceal residential occupancy of non-residential buildings. “Every time the police or fire department came by, everyone felt insecure,” a Los Angeles artist recalls of the years before artist colonization of that city’s downtown was officially blessed. But if illegal urban homesteading held its perils, so—artists learned to their dismay—could legal live/work arrangements. New York’s SoHo artist community represents the classic case in a scenario that has been repeated in cities across America.

A residential neighborhood in the early 1800s, later New York’s first red-light district, SoHo was a somewhat down-at-the-heels manufacturing and warehouse area in the 1960s, when artists pinched by rising uptown rents began arriving in force. The neighborhood’s collection of old cast-iron buildings, built to meet the demands of 19th-century industry, had floors strong enough for the heaviest sculpture; SoHo lofts offered open space, good light, cheap rent.

As more and more artists colonized SoHo, there was increasing scrutiny by city inspectors. Artists were memorably creative in their attempts to conceal illegal residency in a district zoned for manufacturing. “Stoves were beautifully boxed in beaver boards and explained away as model stands,” reads a contemporary news account. “Beds were rolled under painting racks and sliding doors built to conceal them . . . Some artists put up blackout curtains; others encouraged dust to accumulate as thickly as possible on windows, to create an illusion of tenantlessness.”

In time, fear of eviction gave way to political action. A local artists’ tenant association lobbied city officials, and marched in protest against problematic zoning laws. By the 1970s, live/work space—for artists certified by the city—could be occupied legally in SoHo. And there, many artists would say later, went the neighborhood.

According to a report published by Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, “Once loft apartments were legalized for artists, large uptown galleries ‘discovered’ SoHo and opened downtown branches. Following on the heels of the fashionable galleries came smart boutiques and restaurants . . . With the steady influx of non-artists attracted

to SoHo by the romantic ethos of bohemia, rents skyrocketed and rent-gouging was not uncommon. As SoHo increasingly became the chic place to live, only the ‘successful’ artist could afford to remain there.”

A SoHo guidebook notes that while there were only three galleries in the neighborhood in 1970, there were eighty-five by 1978; lofts that rented for as little as \$75 a month in the 1960s were selling, as co-ops, for as much as \$100,000 by the late 1970s. The gentrification that ate SoHo in time claimed even non-artist tenants. A 1980 article in the *SoHo News* noted that landlords leasing space to boutiques and other small retailers “are asking exorbitant rent increases to reflect the market value of the space.”

In other cities, despite the best-laid plans of artists and local officials, what has come to be called the “SoHo effect” continues to threaten gritty but affordable artist ghettos. (Note that the first principle of successful real estate—location—holds true here. If the presence of artists sets the stage for gentrification, the stage itself must be accessible before boutiques and galleries test the neighborhood.) Several years ago in Los Angeles, according to a California Confederation of the Arts newsletter, “Two women dressed in punk attire were spotted by patrolmen in an abandoned warehouse district where they had set up a live/work studio.” Presumably mistaken for prostitutes, the women “were promptly arrested.” Adds a downtown artist, “And all hell broke loose.” Fortunately, the usual round of evictions, or threats of eviction, of artists living illegally downtown was followed, in 1981, by city council legislation that legalized artists’ live/work space in Los Angeles’ commercial and industrial areas. The Los Angeles artist-in-residence ordinances, according to a report produced for the California Arts Council, contributed to greater visibility for the arts, made artists into community members rather than “outlaws,” and stimulated income-producing re-use of blighted buildings.

However, many observers give the live/work ordinances mixed reviews. Richard Carlson, a developer of downtown artists’ housing, says passage of the ordinances,

which mandate improvements to bring live/work space up to city codes, has “taken the fly-by-nighters out of the business,” leading to better-managed, better-built housing. “The downside,” he readily admits, is that housing has “become more expensive for the artists,” because of the cost of meeting building-and-safety requirements.

Jill Baker, former president of Los Angeles Artists Equity, believes “There’s been a tremendous amount of upheaval because of the ordinances.” She sees downtown, still perceived by many Los Angelenos as dirty and dangerous, in time becoming “a chic place to live . . . And that’s when the artists are going to be shoved out.”

For artist Douglas Ward, “The actual result of the law was to displace the artists who were already downtown,” with the resulting vacuum being filled by people seeking to live the “artist’s lifestyle.” Ward remembers “sleeping on a cot between three piles of plasterboard” when he was building his downtown space. “Now the idea is somebody who has a whole lot of money walks in and gets a key, and has a place that’s already painted and fixed up.”

“It isn’t like SoHo,” believes city planner and artist Marc Pally, who moved to Los Angeles from New York. “But rents have gotten out of hand.” The very presence of artists, he says, has “made downtown living attractive to photographers, architects, scenic people—the Hollywood people,” which in turn has stimulated “a very traditional escalation of property values.”

“Gentrification happens when property gets interesting,” says Lee Ramer, an aide to Councilman Joel Wachs, who sponsored the live/work ordinances. “It’s an economic fact of life,” adds Ramer. “Sometimes, though, artists are so remiss. They don’t protect themselves on paper in any of the ways anyone else would. And when the property gets fixed up, the landlord says, ‘You’re out of luck?’”

After decades of displacement, and dozens of studies and conferences on coping with gentrification, the solution to the problem of artists’ housing probably can be

summarized in a single word—ownership.

Rigorous building codes and zoning regulations continue to plague creators of live/work space in many cities. But in Los Angeles, New York, Minneapolis, San Francisco, and Seattle, among other cities, the codes and regulations have been rewritten to allow artists to both work and live in specified areas of, or throughout, their city. Frequently, procedures have been established to guide artists through the maze of permits and inspections that lead to code compliance. Official committees have labored to define the “artist” and have established certification standards that, theoretically, guarantee only artists will benefit from relaxed rules on live/work space.

Yet gentrification continues to occur, and at an even faster pace than in the past. Artists continue to pioneer and improve neighborhoods and then—after boutiques and galleries and sensitive stockbrokers spill in to bask in new bohemias—artists continue to be pushed out or priced out, forced to pioneer elsewhere.

If zoning reform is a battle (and a necessary and worthy one), ownership is the war. If gentrification is inevitable, a fact of urban life, then housing stability for artists lies in their becoming people of equity, part of the action.

“It is now apparent that the problem and its solution are one and the same: money,” writes Jane Robbins, in *The City as a Stage*. “Money to allow artists to own, and therefore have control over, their spaces—regardless of what happens to values around them.”

A lease, even a good lease, is no match for a deed. In Los Angeles, artist Jill Baker has watched other artists, with three-to-five-year leases, spend time and money improving unfinished live/work space rented out by a local developer of artists’ housing. “The rents go up once they improve the space, more than the artists had been promised. The artists find it a hardship and move out, and the [developer] is left with beautifully finished spaces that can be rented to someone else.”

An artists’ housing advocate in Minneapolis tells of artists with even longer leases being offered \$9,000 per tenant, plus directions to the street, by an owner eager to redevelop his property as market-rate housing. The artists, she says, were granted “a whole week” to ponder the



Gentrification of Boston's Fort Point area led artists to buy the vacant mill at 249 A Street (above and opposite) for redevelopment as live/work space. Hurdles included the 14 banks that declined to provide a mortgage and the Fort Point neighbors who resisted the project because "artists aren't family oriented."

LARRY MAGLOTT

offer. "It's tempting, but it's not really a lot of money when you consider how much it would cost for them to improve a new space."

Making artists owners is, of course, its own complex art. With low incomes and undistinguished financial histories, many artists seem a poor risk to bankers, particularly when the project for which financing is sought is as unconventional as live/work space. Private and public lenders may perceive artists as voluntarily poor—downwardly mobile elitists in a world of the truly needy—and thus unsuitable candidates for development assistance. But with persistence, creativity, and luck (the artist's stock in trade), live/work enclaves that will not collapse when the gentry come marching in are being established throughout the country.

Consider Boston, where the shortage of live/work

space has reached crisis proportions. At a recent city-wide conference on artists' housing, reports the Boston *Herald*, a speaker "asked the audience of more than 300 to raise their hands if they were artists." According to the *Herald*, "Nearly all the hands went up. [The speaker] then asked if they had experienced or were currently in the midst of housing displacement. The 300-odd hands stayed up." Which makes the success of the Fort Point Channel project, in South Boston, all the more heartening.

Artists began moving into Fort Point in the 1970s, when many of the area's 19th-century warehouses were vacant, and rents were low. Soon, as happened in SoHo and many another SoHo since, the area became a magnet for gentrification. By 1979, local artists had begun meeting to search for ways to prevent their displacement, and in time, with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, about 260 artists organized the non-profit Fort Point Arts Community of South Boston, Inc., (FPAC). The artists hired a director with experience in both city planning and adaptive re-use of old buildings. Boards were formed, one composed of artists, to set policy, and another made up of architects, lawyers, and businessmen, to provide professional guidance.

Several months later, 35 FPAC members each put \$1,000 down on a 72,000 square foot, vacant mill in Fort Point. The artists won a zoning variance permitting live/work space and, after approaching 15 banks, obtained a mortgage. Forming a co-operative, they bought the mill for \$910,000 with a financial package that included the bank mortgage, \$250,000 of the artists' own money, plus a low-interest loan from Boston's Community Development Block Grant program.

Hiring an architect, the group designed 35 live/work studios tailored to the needs of artists. Completed at a cost of \$1.5 million, the renovated mill now houses 40 low-and-middle-income artists. The "Artists Permanent Studio Building," at 249 A Street, was cited by the Boston





At the Fort Point "Artists Permanent Studio Building," the architect worked with prospective residents to design live/work accommodations that respond to individual needs and financial resources.

Globe as one of Massachusetts' top five architectural/development projects of 1983.

LARRY MAGGOT

In New York, another artist-controlled group, the Artists Mutual Housing Association (AMHA), has been selected by the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development to create 26 live/work units in two city-owned buildings near Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, in Manhattan. Mortgages for the project are being provided by the State of New York Mortgage Agency. Private funding has come from the South Washington Heights Development Group, "a private development organization interested in the arts, simply a group of investors," according to C. Richard Hatch, a professor of architecture at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and AMHA's founder and director.

Cost of the rehabilitation project will be trimmed by requiring "sweat-equity" investments on the part of prospective residents. Also, live/work units can be resold

only to other artists, and for no more than the original owner's equity investment. Residents must be professional artists (as verified by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs) and must demonstrate their need for space.

A nonprofit development organization, the AMHA is the first mutual housing association in this country devoted to the needs of artists. In mutual housing associations, members pay a fee to join, and are then put on a savings plan. Over time, the group accumulates funds for developing housing, using its deposits as seed money. According to Hatch, the AMHA will rely on "Robin Hood" schemes, in which "artists with steady incomes will pay the high end of market rate," thus subsidizing lower-income artists in the same or other live/work projects through differential rents.

A belief that artists should create art, not space, drives Artspace Projects, Inc., founded in Minneapolis in 1978, as a result of a study by the Minneapolis Arts Commission that documented the complexity and challenge of creating affordable, long-term space for artists. The nonprofit organization has financed and coordinated the development of 43 live/work units in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and 99 artists' studios.

None of that, of course, has stopped the local gentry in their tracks. "There are a number of buildings that have been quite heavily populated by artists that have been bought by developers," says Cheryl Kartes, Artspace's director. Many artist occupants of those buildings had short-term leases, and were forced to move on. Where former artists' space has not become offices, says Kartes, it has been redeveloped for residential use—"either market-rate rentals or condos," neither of which most artists can afford.

"That's where Lowertown Lofts has been successful," she says of a recent Artspace project. "It becomes an ownership co-op in ten years, with the intention that it will always be for artists' housing."

Lowertown
Lofts: A
developer's
wish "to be
part of the
solution" to
artists'
problems in
St. Paul paved
the way for 30
units in a
turn-of-the-
century shoe
factory.





GERALD GUSTAFSON

Lowertown Lofts atrium.

Home to nearly 200 artists over the last decade, the Lowertown area of St. Paul has also experienced \$200 million in redevelopment, with an equal sum committed or planned. As buildings have been redeveloped for more profitable use, there have been wholesale evictions of artist tenants. But at the Lofts, an old shoe factory near the city's Union Depot, Kartes was able to persuade Asset Development Services, Inc.,—the company in the process of buying the building—that live/work space for artists made good business sense in a neighborhood where the company hoped to do further development. “We were part of the problem and we wanted to be part of the solution,” says Brian Nelson, Asset’s president. The company made three floors of the factory building available for housing at below cost, and donated a year of staff time toward the \$1.7 million renovation project.

Funding for the project came from the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation (a nonprofit, private promoter of local development), the City of St. Paul, local foundations, and other sources. Today, 41 artists occupy 30 live/work spaces, for rents averaging \$360 a month. Artists lease the units through a limited-equity cooperative; the cooperative will purchase the project in ten years.



Success breeds success. "There are more developers who would like to see little miracles happen in their buildings," says Kartes. "With the attention we got with the Lofts project, we got some developers coming out of the woodwork saying, 'Can you do that with my building?'"

Yes, is the likely answer. Having overseen the development, for artists' space, of more than 200,000 square feet of vacant or little-used property, Artspace is an old hand at miracles. Kartes says the organization is a bridge builder, fostering long overdue communication between artists, city officials, and developers. To make sure artists are heard on local housing issues, Artspace works at community organizing, encouraging artists to attend, and speak out at, city-planning hearings and other meetings that bear on their future as urban residents. The Artspace staff critiques live/work-and-studio building plans and budgets, and helps artists with lease negotiations. With a computerized data bank, the group also refers artists in need of space to already existing live/work studio facilities. Over the years, Artspace has worked with 4,000 artists in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Now Artspace has joined in a promising new national approach to the artists' housing dilemma. With four

Ceramic sculptor Cliff Garten, in his unfinished space at Lowertown Lofts, is one of 41 artists occupying live/work units in the old building near St. Paul's Union Depot.

other organizations (National Artists Equity, in Washington, D.C., the Foundation for the Community of Artists, in New York, and Innovative Housing and the Bay Area Partnership, both in northern California), Artspace has been awarded Apple Computer equipment for use in establishing a National Artist Space Development Network.

In addition to sponsoring a national conference on artists' housing, and producing a how-to manual (to be updated regularly via computer) on designing, financing, and developing live/work space, the consortium will maintain a computer bulletin board with news and advice on successful live/work projects.

With a zoning question, "The computer could give you an answer on how the same problem has been solved in other states, and you could take that information back to your local planning or zoning office," says Joshua Simon, overall project coordinator and an Innovative Housing staff member. With anticipated participation of groups like Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, "There would be the possibility of quick legal review of development questions." Design concepts and floor plans could also be easily shared through the computer network.

Starting out in three cities—New York, Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis—the housing consortium will also provide a computerized space referral system. To advance their careers, artists often seek residencies, fellowships, or relationships with galleries in other cities. With the referral system, they could register with a member of the housing consortium and, for a small fee, receive a printout of housing opportunities in other parts of the country. "They might find there's somebody in New York who has space and who is looking for space in Washington, and the artists can just switch," says Simon.

However, Simon knows a computer network will not put a roof over the head of every needy artist. "Clearly, there's a growing problem. I guess the one silver lining would be forms of new construction. There might be ways to build new places that would lessen the demand for old industrial buildings. At least in the Bay area, artists seem to be going farther and farther afield in search of housing, renovating old barns, chicken coops, what have you."

Downtown or down on the farm, artists are in a scramble for space. Federal and state housing funds have shrunk even more quickly than supplies of affordable housing stock, and many groups of Americans, not just low-to-middle-income artists, are desperately in need of homes. Given that climate of competitiveness, artists must not only cultivate assistance but also acceptance.

In South Boston, at a zoning hearing, some neighbors opposed the Fort Point artists' plan to establish a live/work cooperative in an abandoned mill. "South Boston is a family neighborhood, and artists aren't family oriented," said a city council representative. The artists countered by inviting the neighbors to their meetings, and by volunteering to teach painting to the area's elderly residents. At a second zoning hearing, the artists won their variance for live/work space.

"The fear of gentrification is omnipresent in New York," says C. Richard Hatch, director of the Artists Mutual Housing Association. In a research project on artists' housing in New York, Hatch noted that as more and more artists are driven from traditional artists' neighborhoods and begin living in working-class areas of the city, "residents are bound to wonder about their impact."

"If the lower Manhattan pattern holds, after the artist will come the art directors and the art collectors," reads the research report. "Soon the original tenants may disappear, and shortly thereafter, the artist pioneers." Hatch says developers of artists' housing must work closely with local community groups, not only to ensure a welcome, but to help prevent displacement of non-artist neighbors.

According to his report, "Restricting eligibility in projects to low-and-moderate-income artists will lessen the appetite of the real-estate adventurer. Keeping projects small in relation to local housing markets is also important." When artists create new ways to develop housing, their knowledge can benefit neighborhood housing groups, he notes, "helping them to increase the supply of affordable family units."

Artists seeking a welcome will also point out, of course, that the presence of artists can be beneficial. "They focus

positive attention on the neighborhood," says Hatch. "They tend to be there 24 hours a day. They patronize local businesses. They tend to be good for the neighborhood—to a limited degree."

Artists also need new ways to woo developers—the seeming enemy of affordable live/work space. In Minneapolis, Cheryl Kartes sees part of her job as teaching developers, as well as city officials and planners, that upscale is not the only way to go in neglected neighborhoods, that there's a certain illogic in "kicking out tenants that are there and bringing in new tenants."

"You can't build partnerships to solve common problems, until people know they have a common problem," says Kartes, who tries to make the case that artists can be a solution in wise redevelopment schemes.

In Sacramento, California, Paul Minicucci, staff director for the California legislature's joint subcommittee on the arts, has even grander visions of artists as problem-solvers. "In California, we don't want the artists to leave the urban areas," he says. Thinking about SoHo from 3,000 miles away, he adds, "We need ways to see that developers look at artists as an attractive way to redevelop neighborhoods."

"My sense is gentrification is a natural process," says Minicucci. "You can't stop developers. I think we should join them and work with them." Minicucci is investigating ways the legislature might encourage that, such as easing artist access to low-cost state loans that might help them "buy into developments on the up side." He also wonders if the needs of artists can be accommodated in enterprise zones. The state already allows inducements (such as low-cost loans, tax write-offs, and relaxed building codes) to encourage developers to invest in blighted industrial areas. "We could have a cultural zone as part of the enterprise zone," says Minicucci, "so artists could, in fact, control enterprise zones." He savors scenarios where artists, in effect, can say to developers, "We're gonna be the bait and you're going to use us to upgrade the area."

"In other words, try to make artists part of the entre-

preneurial process. Then if you get gentrified, you are part of ‘them’ rather than the target.”

Whether the dream is of artists being bade welcome in working-class neighborhoods, or of their becoming objects of desire to developers of old warehouse districts, the message seems the same: artists must promote not only the arts but themselves as neighborhood-enhancing, income-creating elements of the urban fabric.

Solving the problem of artists’ live/work space will benefit more than painters and sculptors. Zoning regulations and building codes recrafted now to allow artists to work where they live and live where they work, may ease the way for the increasing numbers of at-home workers that computer technology is predicted to generate. As artists fashion new tools to do the seemingly impossible—develop affordable urban housing—the millions of Americans who find it harder and harder to keep homes in the city may adapt those methods to their own use. As artists find ways to harness, if not stem, gentrification, blighted neighborhoods may be brought to life for all manner of people, not just the modern gentry.

“Live/work space is the salt marsh of the urban ecology,” said sculptor Richard Mayer, speaking at an Artists Equity live/work conference several years ago in California. “It’s the first link in the chain that nourishes cultural life in the community.”

Drain that marsh, make it impossible for artists to inhabit our cities, and no amount of homage to “the arts” will conceal our cultural desert. Flex the rules, patterns of development, and our imaginations, in ways that permit artists to put down roots, and those acts of urban accommodation will enrich today’s city, and tomorrow’s.

PROJECT ARTAUD*San Francisco***I**

In the early 1970s, when artists began renting space in an old American Can Company plant south of Market Street, there was little evidence that Project Artaud, named after Antonin Artaud, father of avant-garde theater, would someday be seen as one of this country's most successful artists' housing projects.

Back then, artists camped on the floor of the abandoned building, which was periodically invaded by street gangs. Financial windfalls could be genuinely strange, such as when one resident cancelled his sex-change operation and donated the money to the artists' collective. Children playing with matches set fire to a loft where costumes were stored, leading to a \$30,000 insurance settlement—money Artaud artists used to help finance the down payment on the building. The artists secured a bank mortgage and a \$300,000 building-improvement loan from the city's Mission Housing Agency. Artaud was on its way, more or less.

Covering a city block in an industrial wasteland, the three-story, 1927 factory building contained several wings with courtyards in between them, freight elevators, and industrial sash windows. Conventional housing it was not, and Project Artaud residents endured a dozen years of conflict with city building inspectors; the building was condemned time and again for falling short of health and safety codes.

"The truth was, the code didn't fit the artists' situation, or their incomes," according to *Image* magazine, "and even when the code was revised in 1978 to allow for live/work permits in manufacturing districts, its language



SIMO NERI

From cans to culture: The American Can Company's South-of-Market plant in San Francisco was in full production in the 1930s (top). Half-a-century later—and under smoggier skies—the factory building houses one of the nation's most successful artists' housing complexes, Project Artaud.

Opposite, an Artaud interior.

remained hopelessly vague. Residents at Project Artaud and similar complexes would undertake one set of improvements, only to learn that a new inspector insisted on more."

The artists smoothed their relationship with the city, according to *Image*, by hiring Rick Pacurar, a local "political insider" and a strategist for city supervisor Harry Britt, as Artaud's executive director. With Pacurar's guidance and city-hall savvy, Artaud has "methodically built a relationship with the municipal building department, investing in many changes and bartering over many others," reports the magazine.



SIMONE NERI

Artaud residents are members of a nonprofit corporation that was established as the property owner. Rent is paid as monthly dues—22 cents per square foot, plus \$35 per resident, and a utilities fee. Live/work units range in size from 400 to 2,500 square feet and rent for an average \$350 a month. The waiting list to enroll in what one writer has called Artaud's "mini-democracy" (with a vote on management decisions, but no financial equity) is long, and artists must go through a jurying process before becoming collective members.



Artists' spaces at Project Artaud have come a long way since the days when tenants camped on the floor of the abandoned building. So has the artists' once-rocky relationship with city inspectors, who repeatedly condemned the building for violating health-and-safety codes.





Theater Artaud's 45-foot ceiling and 250-foot floor length offer open, flexible space for set designers. Leased from the artists' cooperative that owns the city-block structure, the theater provides low-cost performance space—and frequent sold-out houses—for local and touring companies.

"Depending on who's living with whom" from 70 to 80 artists reside at Artaud, says William Cook, director of Theater Artaud, which leases space from the artists' project. If Artaud was "essentially an outlaw space for a long time," as Cook says, it is now a solid success story, praised nationally as a unique combination of live/work-and-performance space.

Cook, former director of the California Arts Council, led the campaign to redesign and upgrade Theater Artaud; seating capacity was doubled to 300, and there are plans to raise that to 400 seats. In a city with few medium-sized performance spaces, or affordable ones, Theater Artaud has seen sold-out houses in San Francisco's new South-of-Market theater district, co-producing and presenting work by local theater companies with no home of their own, and providing a stage for touring companies.

FENWAY STUDIOS

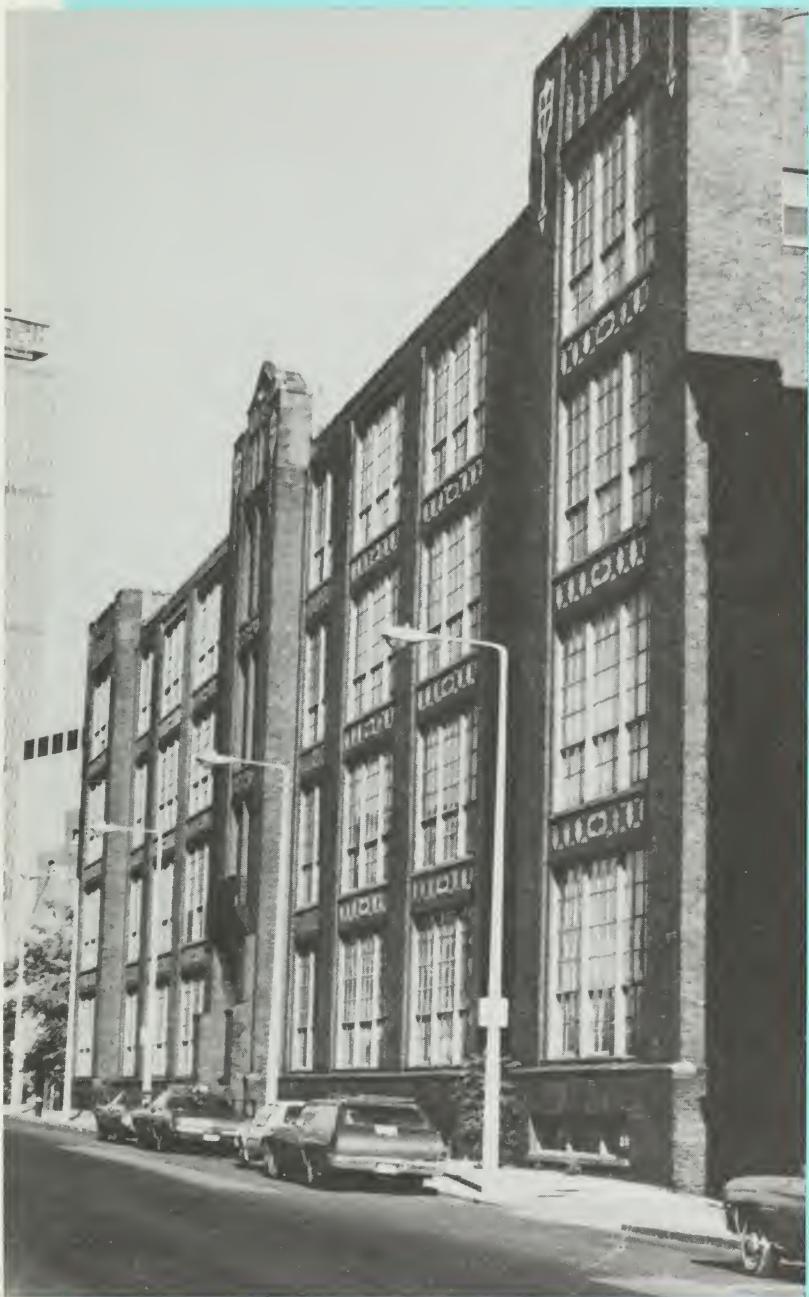
Boston

Any seeker after models for well-designed artists' housing would be wise to look at the Fenway Studios, on the edge of Boston's Back Bay, near Fenway Park.

Prominent art patrons established the Fenway Studios Trust at the turn of the century, to build, own, and manage apartments designed with the needs of visual artists in mind. The architectural firm of J. Harleston Parker and Douglas H. Thomas (their work in Boston includes the Harvard Club and the 1921 John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Building) was chosen to design the project. The result, completed in 1906 after close consultation with a number of painters, was a four-story building with a flat, north-facing facade; large window area ensured maximum northern light for each studio. At the east and west ends of the building, roof parapets were built eight feet high, allowing nude models to be posed in outdoor light without exciting the neighbors.

About the same time the Fenway was going up, the Museum of Fine Arts was being constructed nearby, and many Fenway artists became students or teachers at the Museum School. Fenway tenants have included John Singer Sargent, Augustus John, Joseph DeCamp, Edmund Tarbell, and Louis Kronberg.

Despite its distinguished beginnings, the Fenway Studios later suffered through the same sort of struggle experienced by grittier live/work projects. Mismanagement and back-tax burdens forced the Fenway Studios Trust to put the building up for sale in 1978. Organizing themselves as Artists for the Preservation of the Fenway Studios, the tenants hired a consultant, attracted investors, and pur-



North light for every studio and parapets to calm the neighbors are design features of the 1906 Fenway Studios. By-laws of the Boston cooperative require that studios be resold only to visual artists. The wait for prospective owners is about five years.

chased an option on the building. They also managed to have the Fenway declared a landmark on the National Register of Historic Places. As negotiations continued on the tenants' purchase of the building, funds were raised—with a public tour of studios, an auction of paintings and antiques, and other schemes.

But permanent financing was elusive, and one tenant plan after another collapsed. Investors and banks were wary of committing money to artists, because of their traditionally erratic incomes. Finally, the artists approached the National Consumer Cooperative Bank, which had been established by Congress in 1980, and obtained permanent financing. The old Fenway Trust became Fenway Studios, Inc., and tenants are now share-owners in a cooperative. Their journey back from the brink of high-priced condominium conversion, and almost certain eviction for many artists, constitutes “a miraculous recovery” in the words of a Boston arts advocate who watched the Fenway story unfold.

By-laws of the co-op permit studios to be resold only to visual artists, a policy honoring the intentions of the Fenway's creators. Lest any prospective resident be misinformed, the Fenway artists have crafted—with admirable New England exactitude—by-laws that leave no doubt of what they mean by visual artist. To wit, Article 3.1:

“The phrase ‘Visual artist’ means a person professionally engaged in the making of works of fine art from inert materials, employing visual and manual skills, and creating works solely for purposes of visual contemplation;

“The phrase ‘Fine art’ means painting, sculpture, drawing, prints, and non-utilitarian objects, opposed to utilitarian objects such as pottery, silverware, and furniture;

“The term ‘Inert’ means non-human or non-conscious, as opposed, for example, to the use by a choreographer of a dancer or the use of actors by a playwright; works of visual art are essentially static or made from static materials, and are non-temporal; a performance (play or dance) exists in time and only

while being performed; a painting or sculpture exists as a constant object; a dancer, therefore, is not a visual artist;

"The term 'Manual' eliminates photographers and film-makers: both may be artists at the visual level but the manual skills of operating a camera do not parallel drawing, painting, or sculpting skills; the camera has built into its mechanism the capacity for representation; the visual artist acquires a visual language both intellectually and manually;

"The phrase 'Constructed solely for purposes of visual contemplation' eliminates crafts, graphic design (commercial artists) and architecture, since all serve a utilitarian function beyond their own structure; a work of visual art exists for its own sake, that is, to be looked at."

About two-thirds of the Fenway's 46 studios are used as live/work space, the rest as studios only. Ceilings are 16 feet high, and the north wall of each studio is almost entirely glass. Monthly co-op fees (including payments for insurance, management, and the mortgage) range from \$370 for a studio of 578 square feet to \$730 for 1,216 square feet—"a fraction" of the Boston market-rate, according to painter and current Fenway Studios president Thomas Mairs. About two dozen artists are on the Fenway's waiting list. "A person who applied right now and would take anything," says Mairs, "would probably have to wait about five years."

THE BREWERY

“I

Los Angeles

It looks," suggests one resident, "like kind of a World War II bombed-over building."

"It's very beautiful in an industrial sort of way," tries another. "And there's lots of parking, which is a rarity in Los Angeles."

Home to more than 150 artists, the collection of concrete buildings on 16 acres along the Golden State Freeway is described by its owner and developer, Richard Carlson, as "a commercial/industrial complex for art and industry"—better known as The Brewery, one of Los Angeles' most successful live/work projects.

Carlson Industries purchased the old Pabst Brewery north of downtown several years ago. Out came vats and tanks and pipework, and in went 90 units of live/work

Vast space
for reasonable
rent draws
Los Angeles
artists to The
Brewery, where
90 live/work
units replaced
the beer vats.



MICHAEL GUTSTADT

space, with new 12-by-12 foot windows cut through the concrete walls.

"I started putting it out for rental, to whomever," recalls Richard Carlson. The city's artists showed the most interest. "And I opened up some other space and as soon as I opened it, it would fill up."

What was attracting the artists was the prospect of vast space for reasonable rent. The Brewery's live/work tenants pay about \$600 a month for units ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 square feet, and up to \$2,000 a month for 6,000 square feet.

"All the spaces have 30-foot ceilings," says a tenant, "and the hall I live on is about three blocks long." In addition, the project's concrete floors are "very practical for artists," she says. "You don't mind messing it up."

If all those veterans of minimalist lofts knew The



"Industrial" beauty, says one tenant, distinguishes the old Pabst complex north of downtown. A new restaurant will give artist residents a place to break quiche with clients.

Brewery was right for them, Richard Carlson was less certain about his new tenants. "I thought, 'Why should I rent to artists? For 300 years they've been ducking their landlords'" But he found his first artist tenants "were good people, nothing out of the ordinary." He now says, with something like conviction, "We've got professors here from some of the major art schools in the area. They're not going to duck the rent. Hopefully."

Carlson is now building new space at the complex, although not for live/workers. He hopes to attract furniture showrooms and furniture designers, photography studios, and other non-residential tenants. "And I'm building a little restaurant on the corner, because I've got 160 to 180 artists who've got to eat. I figure it would be nice for them to have a place to meet with clients."

ARTIST HOUSING
COOPERATIVE

“R

Baltimore

Rumblings in the art community" regarding a shortage of artists' housing, says an official at Baltimore's Neighborhood Progress Administration, sparked the development of one of the nation's newest live/work projects—ten rehabilitated rowhouses that will provide space for 32 painters, sculptors, writers, dancers, musicians, and other artists.

The city's Artist Housing Cooperative, in the 1400 block of East Baltimore Street, is located in Washington Hill, a busy residential and commercial area north of historic Fells Point and east of downtown. Potters and other craftsmen have already rehabilitated storefronts, with apartments above, to create the Shopsteads project in Washington Hill. In the same neighborhood, sculptors have redeveloped a street-car barn and a warehouse for studios. "So this seemed to be building on something that was already there," Donna Keck, a program manager at the Neighborhood Progress Administration, the city's housing agency, says of the decision to plant the new artists' co-op in the nascent artists' community.

Owned by the city, the three-story rowhouses were conveyed for \$1 to the developer, a specially established



not-for-profit corporation with a board made up of city officials plus representatives from the Washington Hill neighborhood and the Baltimore artists' community. The \$1.25 million rehabilitation project has been financed with Community Development Block Grant funds, a low-interest loan from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and other funds representing "the last pots of this kind of federal money," according to Keck. Although Baltimore intends to "facilitate" future artists' housing, she says, other funding sources will have to carry the burden.

For a \$1,000 down payment, artists will become members of the corporation that owns the rowhouses. A monthly fee of about \$300 per tenant will cover principal and interest on the mortgage, taxes, insurance, and maintenance. The 32 units, some of which are equipped for occupancy by the handicapped, range from 609 to 1,055 square feet. Artists are expected to finish their own spaces.

Prospective residents must submit a resume and portfolio, to be reviewed by local artists and faculty from area art schools. Applicants must also meet income requirements pegged to federal Section 8 guidelines. "If someone's got a full-time job and they're making a decent income, they are not eligible," says Keck. "If they are struggling artists and kind of doing odd jobs to get by, they're the people we're looking for." Baltimore's housing cooperative for artists was scheduled for completion in late 1986.



Thirty-two Baltimore artists will occupy city-rehabilitated rowhouses in a neighborhood already staked out by potters and sculptors.

Seattle

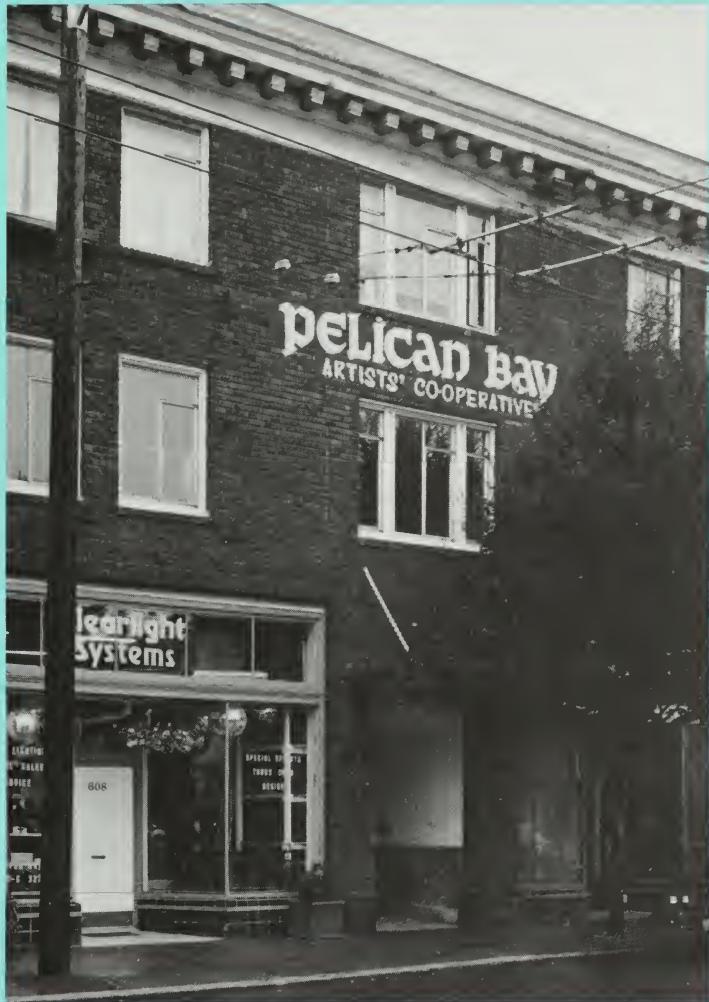
A month-to-month lease on a building always up for sale? Pelican Bay, an aging, three-story apartment building in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, is everything that successful artists' housing is not supposed to be. Then again, Pelican Bay has been doing it all wrong for close to two decades now.

"Pelican Bay is the oldest living thing out here in terms of artists' co-ops," says muralist Don Barrie, who began leasing the building in 1968. "Other co-ops come and go, but we're still here."

The project, with a mix of straight studios and live/work units, isn't really a co-op. Barrie rents the building month-to-month from the health-care company that owns it, and sublets to about two dozen Seattle artists on the same terms. The 18 apartments (with conventional eight-and-a-half-foot ceilings and standard windows) sit atop six storefronts that, for the most part, serve as live/work space. "High rent is \$245 a month" for an upstairs unit, says Barrie, while a 20-by-70-foot storefront goes for \$375.

"I think it's just a miracle it keeps going," he says of Pelican Bay. "It's always been for sale, too." While Barrie feels it is only a matter of time until the building is finally sold, he has no interest in purchasing it. "Stability would be to buy it, but then it becomes another condo on the block." Barrie believes he can be more helpful to low-income artists by providing admittedly insecure live/work space at rock-bottom rents.

In 1974, Barrie completed the mural, on the south end of the apartment building, that has become Pelican



"Other co-ops come and go, but we're still here," says the manager of Pelican Bay, where two dozen Seattle artists rent inexpensively—if insecurely—from one month to the next.

Bay's trademark. It all came about with the same lack of formality that works so well at Pelican Bay. "The building had to be repaired in that area," says Barrie, "and the mural evolved out of that."

“I

Los Angeles

I had lofts on Broome Street, in SoHo, when they were about \$150 a month, and I liked that kind of living,” transplanted Easterner George Rollins says of his decision to create live/work space for himself and other artists several years ago in the heart of downtown Los Angeles. With his brother, Rollins began scouting for buildings in 1978, concentrating on the then-undiscovered downtown area, says George, because “LA’s like a big suburb, and suburbs give me the willies.”

Eventually, the brothers settled on the 1916 Ben Hur Coffee Company building on Traction Avenue. Acting as their own contractors, they redeveloped the five-story building into two floors of commercial space (now rented for storage and to a clothing-design studio), and three floors of housing.

The project was privately financed, with an added measure of risk arising from the fact that downtown live/work space was illegal in those years. Since passage of the city’s artist-in-residence ordinances, the Rollins brothers have rewired the building and installed new plumbing and fire doors to comply with building codes.

The concrete-frame building, with masonry infill (designed for earthquake loading), contains a freight elevator, and has 12-foot ceilings and large windows. Artists’ spaces range from 2,000 to 5,000 square feet, with a 3,000-square-foot unit renting for about \$900 a month. Eight painters, two sculptors, and a photographer reside in the building; half of 800 Traction’s tenants have been there since the building opened.





The secret of the private project's success? "We got in early and we got in cheap and we did all the work ourselves," says George Rollins, who still relishes life downtown. "I wouldn't move an inch."

In the eight years since Rollins staked out his corner of downtown Los Angeles, dozens of galleries have opened and veteran residents say they see SoHo on the horizon.

Across the street from 800 Traction a brightly painted airplane is pinned—with a two-ton nail—to the wall of the American Hotel, an artists' rooming house since 1979. In the same building is Al's Bar, once a refuge for truckers and employees of downtown's warehouses and produce terminals, now, according to a local newspaper listing, a "famous downtown bastion for bohemian barflies." The bar, the hotel, and the upstairs American Gallery, a showcase for Los Angeles artists, together constitute "a piece of economic sculpture," according to Marc Kreisel, self-described "artist-in-charge" at the privately financed cultural complex. In the turn-of-the-century hotel, 44 artists occupy single or double rooms, with shared baths. "You don't get much," Kreisel says of a \$250 a month single, "but the people are nice."

Across the street from artists' housing at 800 Traction is Al's Bar, a downtown landing strip for a painted airplane and "bohemian barflies."

READINGS

For thoughtful discussions of problems of artists' housing, and practical advice on developing live/work space, artists and arts organizations should seek out the following reports, books, and articles:

Artist Housing for New York City, Final Report June 1984, a research project organized by architects C. Richard Hatch and Michael Kwartler and sponsored by the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board in the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. (See Artists' Mutual Housing Association, Inc., under "For More Information.")

Artists Live/Work Space, Changing Public Policy, a 1981 project of Artists Equity Association, Inc., Northern California Chapter, and one of the most comprehensive discussions of artists' housing issues.

Bee, Carmi, *Artists' Housing: A Survey of Live/Work Space*, an architect's 1983 study, supported by the Design Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, of large and small live/work projects in seven American cities.

Lehmann, Phyllis and Kenneth Fain, "Staying Aloft: Visual Artists Struggle to Save their Studio-Living Spaces in Urban Warehouses." *The Cultural Post*, May/June 1979.

Cytron, Daniel and Joel Bass, *The Los Angeles Artist-in-Residence Ordinances: A Report on its History, Effect, Implementation and Future*, a November 1983 report produced for the California Arts Council.

McCann, Michael, Ph.D., *Artist Beware*, New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1979. (This book on general hazards of art materials includes chapters on studio safety and ventilation)

Robbins, Jane, "Helping the Artist to Live and Work in the City." In *The City as a Stage: Strategies for the Arts in Urban Economics*, edited by Kevin W. Green. Washington, DC: Partners for Livable Places, 1983.

Seattle Artists' Housing Handbook: Creating and Controlling Living/Working Space Through Building Conversion, an April 1980 handbook prepared for the Department of Community Development and the Arts Commission of the City of Seattle, "to help groups of artists interested in working together to secure space in which they can live and work."

Special Space, A Guide to Artists' Housing and Loft Living, a 1981 report prepared by the law firm of Willkie Farr & Gallagher for Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts, Inc.

Viviano, Frank and Sharon Silva, "Coming of Age at Project Artaud." *Image*, November 17, 1985.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



To learn more about artists' housing projects discussed in this book, contact the following individuals or organizations:

Artists' Mutual Housing Association, Inc.
12 Engle Street
Englewood, New Jersey 07631

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Telephone 201-568-4993

Artspace Projects, Inc.
400 First Avenue, North, Suite 203
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401

Cheryl Kartes, Director
Telephone 612-339-4372

Baltimore Artist Housing
c/o Citizens for Washington Hill, Inc.
1629 East Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21231

Brewery
c/o Carlson Industries
1920 North Main Street
Los Angeles, California 90031

Carnegie Hall
881 Seventh Avenue
New York, New York 10019

Stan Mongin, Real Estate Manager
Telephone 212-903-9600

800 Traction Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90013

George Rollins, Developer
Telephone 213-620-9680

Fenway Studios, Inc.
30 Ipswich Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02215

Fort Point Arts Community, Inc.
of South Boston
249 A Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02210

Telephone 617-423-4299

Pelican Bay Co-Op
604 19th Avenue East
Seattle, Washington 98112

Don Barrie, Manager
Telephone 206-322-8537

Project Artaud
499 Alabama Street
San Francisco, California 94110

Rick Pacurar, Executive Director
Telephone 415-621-8430

Westbeth Corporation
463 West Street
New York, New York 10014

Telephone 212-691-1500

Zenith Gallery
1441 Rhode Island Avenue, N.W.
Carriage House (Rear)
Washington, D.C. 20005

Margery Goldberg, Director
Telephone 202-667-3483

SCUA
NEA
390

A black and white photograph showing a section of a brick wall. On the left, there is a large arched window with multiple panes. To its right is a vertical pipe or seam in the wall. Further right is another arched window, also with multiple panes. The brickwork appears aged and textured. In the upper left corner, there is some faint, illegible graffiti.

**Commissioned by
Design Arts Program
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